ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

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November 14, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
FROM: Committee Majority Staff
RE: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Hearing on November 18, 2025

I.   INTRODUCTION

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will hold a hearing on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. (ET), in 2123 Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is entitled "Innovation with Integrity: Examining the Risks and Benefits of AI Chatbots."

II.   WITNESSES

- **Marlynn Wei, MD, JD**, Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist, and Author;
- **John Torous, MD, MBI**, Director of Digital Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School; and
- **Jennifer King, PhD**, Privacy and Data Policy Fellow, Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence.
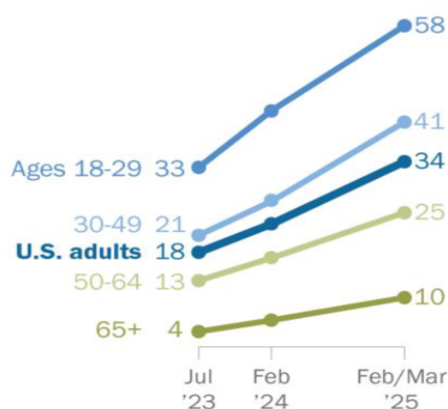
III.   BACKGROUND

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are computer-powered information systems that perform a variety of tasks such as problem solving, human-like reasoning, and content creation.[1] Chatbots powered by large language model (LLM) generative AI systems emerged in recent years as a popular interactive tool. Some of the popular generative AI chatbots include OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Character Technologies' Character.AI, Meta AI, Snapchat MyAI, Anthropic's Claude, and xAI's Grok.

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[1] Nat'l Aeronautics and Space Admin., *What is Artificial Intelligence?*, https://www.nasa.gov/what-is-artificial-intelligence/ (last visited Oct. 7, 2025).

The use of ChatGPT has nearly doubled since 2023, with nearly 800 million users a week, illustrating the dramatically increased use of AI chatbot models in recent years.[2] Moreover, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey, 34 percent of U.S. adults have used ChatGPT.[3] While the use of chatbots is increasing among adults of all ages, research shows that young adults between ages 18 to 30 are using ChatGPT more than other adults.[4]

ChatGPT use continues to rise; a majority of adults under 30 have used it

% of U.S. adults who say they have ever used ChatGPT

	Jul '23	Feb '24	Feb/Mar '25
Ages 18-29	33		58
30-49	21		41
U.S. adults	18		34
50-64	13		25
65+	4		10

Note: Those who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 24-March 2, 2025.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
[5]

Children are also increasingly accessing AI chatbots. According to additional survey data collected by Pew Research Center, approximately one-in-ten parents with a child age 5 to 12 says that their child uses AI chatbots.[6] In a fall 2024 survey, 26 percent of teens reported using

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[2] *See The Most Used AI Chatbots in 2025: Global Usage, Trends, and Platform Comparisons of ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, and Claude*, DATA STUDIOS (July 25, 2025), https://www.datastudios.org/post/the-most-used-ai-chatbots-in-2025-global-usage-trends-and-platform-comparisons-of-chatgpt-gemini#google_vignette; Olivia Sidoti and Colleen McClain, *ChatGPT use among Americans roughly doubled since 2023*, Pew Research Center (June 25, 2025), https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/06/25/34-of-us-adults-have-used-chatgpt-about-double-the-share-in-2023/.

[3] Olivia Sidoti and Colleen McClain, *ChatGPT use among Americans roughly doubled since 2023*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (June 25, 2025), https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/06/25/34-of-us-adults-have-used-chatgpt-about-double-the-share-in-2023/.

[4] *Id*.

[5] *Id*.

[6] Colleen McClain et al., *How parents describe their kids' tech use*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Oct. 8, 2025), https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/10/08/how-parents-describe-their-kids-tech-use/.

ChatGPT for school work, an increase of 13 percent since 2023.[7] It is important to note, however, that since the nascent AI chatbot industry is emerging at such a fast pace, there is limited research and data available about the number of users—particularly users under 18 years old—and how much time individuals spend using AI chatbots.

Many users seek out general purpose chatbots for things like therapy, productivity, learning, medical advice, and companionship. While many of these use cases have stirred spirited ongoing public debate, potential benefits of AI chatbots include:

- *Customer service*: Chatbots are increasingly used as a customer service support tool to streamline responses to customer inquiries.[8]
- *Health*: Chatbots can assist with more repetitive tasks or routine processes related to customer service, appointments, or scheduling staff.[9]
- *Productivity*: Chatbots can help users optimize research, edit written content, draft reports, summarize complex concepts, brainstorm ideas, analyze data or code, and create visual content.[10]
- *Learning*: Chatbots can help students with homework and studying assistance, as well as support educators in developing effective assessment tools.[11]

The most commonly used AI chatbots are known as "general purpose" chatbots, meaning they are designed to help with a wide variety of tasks.[12] Others, such as entertainment chatbots, like Character.AI, are optimized to engage with users by developing interactive relationships through personalized responses or even roleplaying as fictional characters.[13] These models differ from chatbots that are programmed with specific training to assist with mental health support.[14] General purpose and entertainment chatbots are not equipped to respond effectively to mental health crises, whereas mental health chatbots have emerged that are specifically designed with the input of licensed therapists, and which may incorporate Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or other psychotherapy techniques.[15] It is important to note that currently no chatbots are FDA-

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[7] Olivia Sidoti et al., *About a quarter of U.S. teens have used ChatGPT for schoolwork – double the share in 2023*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Jan. 15, 2025), https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/01/15/about-a-quarter-of-us-teens-have-used-chatgpt-for-schoolwork-double-the-share-in-2023/.

[8] Chiara Valentina Misischia et al., *Chatbots in customer service: Their relevance and impact on service quality*, 201 PROCEDIA COMPUTER SCIENCE 421 (2022), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877050922004689.

[9] Michelle Clark and Sharon Bailey, *Chatbots in health care: Connecting patients to information*, EMERGING HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES (Jan. 2024), https://www.ncbi nlm nih.gov/books/NBK602381/.

[10] Luona Lin and Kim Parker, *Worker's experience with AI chatbots in their job*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Feb. 25, 2025), https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2025/02/25/workers-experience-with-ai-chatbots-in-their-jobs/.

[11] Narius Farhad Davar et al., *AI chatbots in education: Challenges and opportunities*, 16 INFORMATION 235 (Mar. 17, 2025), https://doi.org/10.3390/info16030235.

[12] Jenna Glover, *Why are millions turning to general purpose AI for mental health? As Headspace's chief clinical officer, I see the answer every day*, FORTUNE (last visited Oct. 16, 2025), https://fortune.com/2025/09/16/what-is-ai-psychosis-chat-companions-mental-health-headspace/.

[13] Zara Abrams, *Using generic AI chatbots for mental health support: A dangerous trend*, AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (Mar. 12, 2025), https://www.apaservices.org/practice/business/technology/artificial-intelligence-chatbots-therapists.

[14] *Id.*

[15] *First therapy chatbot trial yields mental health benefits*, DARTMOUTH UNIVERSITY (Mar. 7, 2025), https://home.dartmouth.edu/news/2025/03/first-therapy-chatbot-trial-yields-mental-health-benefits.

approved to diagnose, treat, or cure a mental health disorder and that any chatbot purported to be a mental health resource is unregulated.[16] While the benefits of AI chatbots are vast, inappropriate or irresponsible uses of AI chatbots may have severe adverse consequences, including risks to mental health, child safety, and privacy.

A. Mental Health

When used responsibly, AI chatbots are helpful tools for a wide variety of tasks. Use of AI chatbots, however, can negatively affect users' mental health. For example, psychiatric researchers have found mental health issues associated with AI chatbot usage, including emotional dependence, emotional manipulation, worsening loneliness and social isolation, and even potential for AI psychosis.[17] The severity of these adverse impacts varies among users and can be different depending on whether the individual has an underlying mental health issue or whether the user is a child or an adult.[18]

Dr. Marlynn Wei, a psychiatrist who has focused on AI and mental health, defined four areas of psychological risk posed by AI chatbots: (1) relational, attachment, or social; (2) reality-testing; (3) crisis management; and (4) systemic risks.[19] Relational, attachment, or social risks include worsening loneliness and social isolation, emotional manipulation, and emotional dependence.[20] Reality-testing risks can manifest as amplification of delusions and hallucinations.[21] Crisis management risks mean that AI chatbots may miss warning signs and provide unsafe information in a crisis situation, in some cases even demonstrating susceptibility to sharing self-harm information despite guardrails that some companies have in place.[22] Finally, other potential risks range from confidentiality and privacy concerns to training data bias and stigma reinforcement to a recognition that chatbots are not equipped for clinical judgement.[23]

Additionally, in a recent report authored by researchers at Duke University and Johns Hopkins University about the risks connected with AI chatbots, researchers found 10

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[16] Zara Abrams, *Using generic AI chatbots for mental health support: A dangerous trend*, AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (Mar. 12, 2025), https://www.apaservices.org/practice/business/technology/artificial-intelligence-chatbots-therapists.

[17] Noor Al_Sibai, *Psychiatrists Warn That Talking to AI Is Leading to Severe Mental Health Issues*, FUTURISM (Aug. 19, 2025), https://futurism.com/psychiatrists-ai-mental-health-chatbots; *see,* e.g., Allen Frances and Luciana Ramos, *Preliminary Report on Chatbot Iatrogenic Dangers,* PSYCHIATRIC TIMES (Aug. 15, 2025), https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/preliminary-report-on-chatbot-iatrogenic-dangers; Marlynn Wei, *Hidden Mental Health Dangers of Artificial Intelligence Chatbot*, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY (Sep. 8, 2025), https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/urban-survival/202509/hidden-mental-health-dangers-of-artificial-intelligence-chatbots?msockid=0ac0676424c56f85395872cf25496e0e; James Parker, *What are the Risks of Using Ai-powered Chatbots and Assistants?,* CYBERLY, https://www.cyberly.org/en/what-are-the-risks-of-using-ai-powered-chatbots-and-assistants/index.html (last visited Sep. 15, 2025).

[18] *See* Celeste Kidd and Abeba Birhane, *How AI Can Distort Human Beliefs*, 380 Science 1222 (June 23, 2023), 0623Perspectives_17285344.indd.

[19] Marlynn Wei, *Hidden Mental Health Dangers of Artificial Intelligence Chatbot*, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY (Sep. 8, 2025), https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/urban-survival/202509/hidden-mental-health-dangers-of-artificial-intelligence-chatbots?msockid=0ac0676424c56f85395872cf25496e0e.

[20] *Id.*

[21] *Id.*

[22] *Id.*

[23] *Id.*

separate types of adverse mental health events associated with the 27 chatbots included in the study, including sexual harassment, delusions of grandeur, self-harm, psychosis, and suicide.[24] The report found that the lack of involvement by mental health professionals in chatbot development is one cause of these risks.[25]

One reason for these potential psychological risks and harms associated with AI chatbot utilization is that the technology may produce misleading or fabricated information in ways that can distort human beliefs.[26] Unlike human communication, where uncertainty is often conveyed through hesitations or corrections, chatbots deliver fluent and confident responses without signaling doubt.[27] This presentation style makes users more likely to accept misleading content as fact, especially when seeking answers in moments of uncertainty.[28] Repeated exposure to such fabrications and stereotypes further entrenches false beliefs, deepening resistance to correction even when contrary evidence becomes available.[29] The risk is compounded by the anthropomorphizing of chatbots, where some users readily attribute knowledge, intentionality, or even sentience to these systems, which accelerates the internalization of their outputs.[30]

Moreover, the widespread integration of chatbots into search engines, smartphones, and marketing platforms may create feedback loops in which AI-generated text and imagery are recycled into future training data, potentially amplifying these distortions over time.[31] If false information resolves a user's uncertainty, it is particularly difficult to revise, raising the danger of long-lasting belief distortions at both the individual and population levels.[32] Children face disproportionate risks to being harmed by misleading or fabricated information that may lead to harms.[33] Children are especially vulnerable to accept inaccurate or biased content as fact due to their developmental tendency to anthropomorphize technology.[34]

Unfortunately, in some instances AI chatbots may have negatively, and substantially, impacted users' mental health, sometimes with severe consequences. For example, this summer, a 56-year-old man committed a murder-suicide following conversations with his "best friend" ChatGPT.[35] These conversations may have worsened his growing paranoia and fed delusions that he was being targeted by a surveillance operation and that his mother was part of the conspiracy

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[24] Allen Frances and Luciana Ramos, *Preliminary Report on Chatbot Iatrogenic Dangers,* PSYCHIATRIC TIMES (Aug. 15, 2025), https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/preliminary-report-on-chatbot-iatrogenic-dangers.

[25] *Id.*

[26] Celeste Kidd and Abeba Birhane, *How AI Can Distort Human Beliefs*, 380 SCIENCE 1222 (June 23, 2023), 0623Perspectives_17285344.indd.

[27] *Id.*

[28] *Id.*

[29] *Id.*

[30] *Id.*

[31] *Id.*

[32] *Id.*

[33] *Id.*

[34] *Id.*

[35] Julie Jargon and Sam Kessler, *A Troubled Man, His Chatbot and a Murder-Suicide in Old Greenwich,* THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (Aug. 28, 2025), https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/chatgpt-ai-stein-erik-soelberg-murder-suicide-6b67dbfb; Marlynn Wei, *Hidden Mental Health Dangers of Artificial Intelligence Chatbot*, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY (Sep. 8, 2025), https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/urban-survival/202509/hidden-mental-health-dangers-of-artificial-intelligence-chatbots?msockid=0ac0676424c56f85395872cf25496e0e.

against him.[36] The man subsequently killed his mother and himself.[37] In another instance, a 76-year-old man using an AI chatbot attempted to visit a non-existent person in New York City.[38] The man believed the chatbot was "a young, beautiful woman," as the chatbot proclaimed to be a real person, along with providing a fake address with a door code.[39] He later suffered fatal injuries on a trip while attempting to visit the non-existent person.[40]

B. <u>Child Safety</u>

Children may be especially vulnerable to the harms associated with using AI chatbots for entertainment or companions.[41] Perhaps unsurprisingly, research has shown children are more susceptible than adults to blindly trusting chatbots.[42] Moreover, AI chatbots can expose children to content that distorts reality and gives dangerous advice.[43] Some academics have emphasized that younger users are not as prepared as adults to respond to potentially dangerous situations that might arise from online relationships.[44] Additionally, heightened risk of sexual abuse, compounded risk of bullying, financial exploitation, dependency, and social withdrawal may also be among the risks that AI chatbots pose to children.[45]

The risks of AI chatbot usage for children may be derived from the way chatbots are designed and marketed. Generative AI chatbots, especially those designed for entertainment or companionship, closely mirror the conversational tendencies of a trustworthy friend or family member and may lead to overly trusting and otherwise unhealthy relationships.[46] Children can receive "advice" from a chatbot on dangerous topics including sex, illicit drug use, self-harm and suicide, and eating disorders.[47] The time spent engaging with a chatbot, especially if done for hours at a time, can further isolate children and teens that may have a propensity to depression,

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[36] *Id.*

[37] *Id.*

[38] Jeff Horwitz, *A flirty Meta AI bot invited a retiree to meet. He never made it home*, REUTERS (Aug. 14, 2025), https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/meta-ai-chatbot-death/.

[39] *Id.*

[40] *Id.*

[41] Joanna Parga-Belinkie, How AI Chatbots Affect Kids: Benefits, Risks, & What Parents Need to Know (last updated Aug. 27, 2025), https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/are-ai-chatbots-safe-for-kids.aspx.

[42] *Id.*

[43] *See* e.g., *Parents of teens who died by suicide after AI chatbot interactions testify in Congress*, CBS NEWS (Sept. 16, 2025), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ai-chatbots-teens-suicide-parents-testify-congress/; John Sanford, *Why AI companions and young people can make for a dangerous mix*, STANFORD MEDICINE (Aug. 27, 2025), https://med.stanford.edu/news/insights/2025/08/ai-chatbots-kids-teens-artificial-intelligence.html; News Release, Federal Trade Commission, FTC launches inquiry into AI chatbots acting as companions (Sept.11, 2025), https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-launches-inquiry-ai-chatbots-acting-companions.

[44] Jon Swaine and Naomi Nix, *Meta suppressed research on child safety, employees say,* THE WASHINGTON POST (Sep. 8, 2025), https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2025/09/08/meta-research-child-safety-virtual-reality/.

[45] *AI chatbots and companions – risks to children and young people*, ESAFETY COMMISSIONER (Feb. 18, 2025), https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/ai-chatbots-and-companions-risks-to-children-and-young-people.

[46] News Release, Federal Trade Commission, FTC launches inquiry into AI chatbots acting as companions (Sept.11, 2025), https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-launches-inquiry-ai-chatbots-acting-companions.

[47] *AI chatbots and companions – risks to children and young people*, ESAFETY COMMISSIONER (Feb. 18, 2025), https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/blogs/ai-chatbots-and-companions-risks-to-children-and-young-people.

social isolation, and loneliness.[48] At the same time, chatbot service providers reportedly lack appropriate safeguards for children. For example, an internal Meta document that contains policies for its chatbot model detailed how the company previously permitted its AI creations to "engage a child in conversations that are romantic or sensual," though company officials subsequently stated the policies were being revised.[49] Moreover, other reports allege Meta's sexually suggestive chatbots have resembled children, and that the company's chatbots have flirted or engaged in sexual roleplay with teenagers.[50]

In addition, Character.AI, the AI chatbot operated by Character Technologies, Inc., reportedly appeals to children because it allows users to interact with a fictional or created character.[51] As a result, Character.AI has faced allegations that its platform is knowingly marketed to minors. Specifically, last year, a Florida mother filed suit against Character.AI, claiming its chatbot encouraged her 14-year-old son to commit suicide.[52] The suit claims that her son was engaging with a chatbot that was hyper-sexualized and designed to appeal to children.[53] Two additional families sued Character.AI, one claiming that their 13-year-old daughter committed suicide after sharing mental health struggles and having sexually explicit conversations with chatbots.[54] The other lawsuit details how a 14-year old girl attempted suicide because her mother removed access to her Character.AI chatbot companions.[55]

Lastly, Utah recently sued Snap, Inc, claiming in part that its "experimental" My AI chatbot has untested safety protocols that give misleading or harmful advice to minors, including how to hide alcohol or drugs from an adult or set the mood for a sexual experience with an adult.[56]

C. **Privacy Concerns**

The use of AI chatbots may pose new privacy and data security risks. Specifically, AI chatbots may be used for sensitive conversations ranging from therapy and medical inquiries to

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[48] *Id.*

[49] Jeff Horwitz, *Meta's AI rules have let bots hold 'sensual' chats with children,* REUTERS (Aug. 14, 2025), https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/meta-ai-chatbot-guidelines/.

[50] *Id.*

[51] Nitasha Tiku, *A Teen Contemplating Suicide Turned to a Chatbot. Is It Liable for Her Death?* THE WASHINGTON POST (Sept. 16, 2025), https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/09/16/character-ai-suicide-lawsuit-new-juliana/.

[52] Kelsie Hoffman, *Florida mother files lawsuit against AI company over teen son's death: "Addictive and manipulative,"* CBS NEWS (Oct. 23, 2024), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/florida-mother-lawsuit-character-ai-sons-death/.

[53] *Id.*

[54] Hadas Gold, *More Families Sue Character.AI Developer, Alleging App Played a Role in Teens' Suicide and Suicide Attempt*, CNN (Sept. 16, 2025), https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/16/tech/character-ai-developer-lawsuit-teens-suicide-and-suicide-attempt.

[55] Nitasha Tiku, *A Teen Contemplating Suicide Turned to a Chatbot. Is It Liable for Her Death?* THE WASHINGTON POST (Sept. 16, 2025), https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/09/16/character-ai-suicide-lawsuit-new-juliana/.

[56] News Release, Utah Department of Commerce, Utah Sues Snapchat for Unleashing Experimental AI Technology on Young Users While Misrepresenting the Safety of the Platform (June 30, 2025), https://commerce.utah.gov/2025/06/30/utah-sues-snapchat-for-unleashing-experimental-ai-technology-on-young-users-while-misrepresenting-the-safety-of-the-platform/.

financial and legal advice, with therapy being the most popular use of chatbots.[57] These platforms can pose risks to user privacy, if not properly managed.[58]

While many users perceive these interactions to be private, conversations with AI chatbots are not necessarily private and these platforms are not bound by confidentiality obligations such as attorney–client privilege or doctor–patient confidentiality.[59] For example, recent incidents revealed that conversations thought to be secure were inadvertently exposed through features like "share" functions or through security vulnerabilities, resulting in chat transcripts becoming publicly searchable.[60] In some cases, malicious prompt injections enabled access to user account data.[61] These risks highlight the lack of user awareness and the novel data security risks related to how user data is collected and used.[62]

Moreover, privacy issues are exacerbated by individual and organizational behavior. Users often overshare due to a false sense of anonymity, with highly personal medical, financial, or workplace information ending up on servers that lack proper safeguards.[63] Businesses face additional risks when employees engage in "shadow AI" use—feeding confidential corporate or client data into chatbots outside official policies and protections.[64] In highly regulated sectors such as healthcare, finance, and law, this creates potential for significant, negative consequences including data breaches, blackmail, cyberfraud, and regulatory violations.[65]

In addition to adults and businesses, AI chatbots expose children to significant but often underappreciated privacy and safety risks. Research shows that while parents frequently set household rules around screen time, they tend to treat conversational AI platforms as interchangeable with social media or smartphone use, failing to recognize the distinctive risks they pose.[66] Furthermore, concerns related to AI exploiting individuals' likenesses, voices, and personas are exacerbated if, for example, a user uploads their photo to an AI chatbot. This could result in their likeness being used to train AI models or create deep-fake images and garner personal or biometric information.[67]

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[57] Bernard Marr, *AI Chatbots Are Quietly Creating A Privacy Nightmare*, FORBES (Sep. 15, 2025), https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2025/09/15/ai-chatbots-are-quietly-creating-a-privacy-nightmare/.

[58] James Parker, *What are the Risks of Using AI-powered Chatbots and Assistants?*, CYBERLY, https://www.cyberly.org/en/what-are-the-risks-of-using-ai-powered-chatbots-and-assistants/index html (last visited Sep. 15, 2025).

[59] Bernard Marr, *AI Chatbots Are Quietly Creating A Privacy Nightmare*, FORBES (Sep. 15, 2025), https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2025/09/15/ai-chatbots-are-quietly-creating-a-privacy-nightmare/.

[60] *Id.*

[61] *Id.*

[62] *Id.*

[63] *Id.*

[64] *Does AI Take Your Data? AI and Data Privacy*, NATIONAL CYBERSECURITY ALLIANCE (Mar. 31, 2025), https://www.staysafeonline.org/articles/does-ai-take-your-data-ai-and-data-privacy.

[65] Bernard Marr, *AI Chatbots Are Quietly Creating A Privacy Nightmare*, FORBES (Sep. 15, 2025), https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2025/09/15/ai-chatbots-are-quietly-creating-a-privacy-nightmare/.

[66] RA Smith, *Parents Underestimate the Privacy Risks Kids Face in Virtual Reality*, DUKE TODAY (May 16, 2024), https://today.duke.edu/2024/05/parents-underestimate-privacy-risks-kids-face-virtual-reality.

[67] Agata Stefanovic, *How Your Personal Data is Training AI*, CYBER NEWS (May 5, 2025), https://cybernews.com/ai-news/how-your-personal-information-is-training-ai/.

D. Company Actions to Address AI Chatbot Harms

In response to some of the identified harms and risks from emerging AI chatbots, some companies are taking steps to address safety and privacy concerns associated with their products. While efforts to implement guardrails and avoid future harm are necessary, it is not clear whether the actions that technology companies have taken so far will adequately protect chatbot users, especially children, though some have taken steps to implement design changes and provide resources regarding the use of their products.

For example, in December 2024, Character.AI introduced improved safety guardrails for users in response to lawsuits questioning the safety of the platform for minors.[68] Character.AI added a pop-up resource directing users that mention self-harm or suicide to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), notifications when they have spent an hour on the platform, and a reminder to users that chatbots are not real people and should not be relied upon for professional advice.[69] Character.AI also recently announced that it is banning users under 18 from using its platform and will require age verification for suspected underage users.[70] Before the ban goes into effect on November 25, 2025, Character.AI will identify underage users and put two-hour daily time limits on their use of the app.[71] After November 25, minors will no longer have access to Character.AI chatbots.[72]

Across Snapchat, drug keywords and slang are now blocked and users searching mental health topics are provided with legitimate medical resources.[73] Snapchat's Family Center also allows enrolled parents to restrict their child's access to My AI.[74] Once blocked, My AI remains visible but cannot respond to queries from the user.[75] Within Family Center, parents can also see which friends their child has been chatting with in the last seven days, but it is unclear if this includes interactions with My AI.[76] While these added features give parents more insight into their child's My AI utilization, a child has to accept a parent's invitation to monitor via Family Center and the child can turn off their parents' access at any time.[77]

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[68] Ivan Mehta, *Amid Lawsuits and Criticism, Character AI Unveils New Safety Tools for Teens*, TECHCRUNCH (Dec. 12, 2024), https://techcrunch.com/2024/12/12/amid-lawsuits-and-criticism-character-ai-announces-new-teen-safety-tools/.

[69] Nitasha Tiku, *A Teen Contemplating Suicide Turned to a Chatbot. Is It Liable for Her Death?* THE WASHINGTON POST (Sept. 16, 2025), https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/09/16/character-ai-suicide-lawsuit-new-juliana/; Ivan Mehta, *Amid Lawsuits and Criticism, Character AI Unveils New Safety Tools for Teens*, TECHCRUNCH (Dec. 12, 2024), https://techcrunch.com/2024/12/12/amid-lawsuits-and-criticism-character-ai-announces-new-teen-safety-tools/.

[70] Natallie Rocha and Kashmir Hill, *Character.AI to bar children under 18 from using its chatbots*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 29, 2025), https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/29/technology/characterai-underage-users.html.

[71] *Id.*

[72] *Id.*

[73] *Staying Safe with My AI*, Snapchat Support, https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-us/articles/13889139811860-Staying-Safe-with-My-AI (last visited Oct. 7, 2025).

[74] *How do I Limit My Teen's Access to My AI?*, Snapchat Support, https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-us/articles/22628526282772-How-do-I-limit-my-teen-s-access-to-My-AI (last visited Oct. 7, 2025).

[75] *Id.*

[76] *Id.*

[77] Anna Halkidis, *Snapchat Has a New Location Sharing Feature – Will it Keep Teens Safe?*, PARENTS, https://www.parents.com/snapchat-new-location-sharing-feature-for-teens-8744522 (last visited Oct. 7, 2025).

Meta recently rolled out its new safety features for children engaging with AI chatbots on Facebook and Instagram.[78] These features, available in early 2026, give parents control over the AI chatbot "characters" their child interacts with, sends parents their child's chat summaries, and limits chatbot conversations about romance, suicide, self-harm, and eating disorders, instead redirecting children to mental health resources on these topics.[79] Additionally, teenage users will only be able to access chatbots that provide educational, hobby and sports-related, or skill-based development information.[80] Parents can also set time limits for their teen's maximum time spent on Meta apps per day, including time spent interacting with AI chatbots.[81]

In response to reports that Google Gemini sent threatening messages to a Michigan college student, Google reaffirmed that its policy is "to be maximally helpful to users, while avoiding outputs that could cause real-world harm or offense."[82] According to Google, Gemini is programmed not to generate outputs that encourage dangerous activities; describe or depict violence and gore; state harmful factual inaccuracies; incite violence, harassment, or discrimination; or describe or depict sexually explicit material.[83] Teens using Gemini are under even stronger content enforcement policies to reduce exposure to illegal or age-gated substances.[84] After registering a Gemini account, teens are shown a video providing tips on responsible AI usage.[85] Google has acknowledged that its safeguards against violent or threatening speech have failed in some cases and are working to remove dangerous and "nonsensical" AI outputs.[86]

OpenAI's ChatGPT recently implemented parental controls, allowing parents to link their child's account to theirs, receive safety notifications, and manage content features accessible to their child.[87] ChatGPT teen accounts automatically reduce user access to sensitive content, and parents can manage content features such as model training, memory saving, voice mode, image generation, and quiet hours (i.e., time limits).[88] Although parents do not have visibility into their child's conversations with ChatGPT, they receive notifications if ChatGPT detects "possible signs of serious safety risk," including self-harm.[89] While ChatGPT previously introduced content restrictions to reduce all user's access to harmful information, OpenAI Chief Executive Officer Sam Altman claimed in a recent post on X that the updated version of ChatGPT is safer

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[78] Adam Mosseri and Alexandr Wang, *Empowering parents, protecting teens: Meta's approach to AI safety*, META (Oct. 17, 2025), https://about.fb.com/news/2025/10/teen-ai-safety-approach/.

[79] *Id.*

[80] *Id.*

[81] *Id.*

[82] Alex Clark*, Google AI chatbot responds with a threatening message: "Human…Please die."*, CBS NEWS (Nov. 20, 2024), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/google-ai-chatbot-threatening-message-human-please-die/; *Policy Guidelines for the Gemini App*, Google Gemini, https://gemini.google/policy-guidelines/?hl=en (last visited Oct. 7, 2025).

[83] *Id.*

[84] Safety Center, Google Gemini, https://safety.google/gemini/ (last visited Oct. 7, 2025).

[85] *Id.*

[86] Alex Clark, *Google AI chatbot responds with a threatening message: "Human…Please die."*, CBS NEWS (Nov. 20, 2024), https://www.cbsnews.com/news/google-ai-chatbot-threatening-message-human-please-die/.

[87] Shape how ChatGPT works for your family, ChatGPT, https://chatgpt.com/parent-resources?openaicom_referred=true (last visited Oct. 29, 2025).

[88] *Id.*

[89] *Id.*

and reduces restrictions for adult users, while introducing additional age-gating to allow adults to access adult-content, including erotica.[90] The new ChatGPT-5 model, which was launched October 27, 2025, was developed with guidance from mental health experts to improve its responses to users experiencing a mental health crisis and point users to supportive resources.[91]

In August 2025, xAI launched Grok Kids Mode, which applies content filters to block sensitive, mature, or inappropriate topics and ensures age-appropriate responses that are focused on educational and fun content.[92] Parents can lock the mode setting with a PIN to keep children from turning off the setting.[93]

E. Prior Committee Activity

On March 26, 2025, the Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade held a hearing about online dangers to children.[94] The hearing examined new threats and challenges in online safety, specifically regarding how social media applications may fail to ensure the safety of children online and the harm of sexually explicit AI-generated images.[95] Witnesses highlighted gaps in existing online child safety laws that leave children exposed to sexual exploitation, extortion, and other online harms.[96] Moreover, witnesses raised concerns about the inability of parents to effectively oversee their children's activities while using certain online applications, including the ineffectiveness of existing parental controls.[97] Lastly, some of the witnesses highlighted the important role of existing law to hold AI companies accountable to protect consumers, particularly children.[98]

IV. KEY QUESTIONS

The hearing may include discussion around the following key questions:

- What are some of the benefits that AI chatbots provide and how can AI chatbots improve and optimize Americans' everyday lives?

- What are the risks and harms that have been linked to AI chatbot utilization, including those related to mental health, child safety, and privacy?

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[90] Sam Altman (@sama), X, (Oct. 14, 2025, 12:02 p m.), https://x.com/sama/status/1978129344598827128.
[91] Strengthening ChatGPT's responses in sensitive conversations, ChatGPT (Oct. 27, 2025), https://openai.com/index/strengthening-chatgpt-responses-in-sensitive-conversations/; Model Release Notes, OpenAI (Oct. 27, 2025), https://help.openai.com/en/articles/9624314-model-release-notes.
[92] Elon Musk (@elonmusk), X, (Aug. 19, 2025, 3:41 p m.), https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1957890780422647986; Christina Shaw, *Elon Musk announces Baby Grok AI chatbot designed specifically for children's learning needs*, FOX BUSINESS (Jul. 20, 2025), https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/elon-musk-announces-kid-friendly-baby-grok-ai-chatbot-designed-specifically-childrens-learning-needs.
[93] Elon Musk (@elonmusk), X, (Aug. 19, 2025, 3:41 p m.), https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1957890780422647986.
[94] *The World Wild Web: Examining Online Harms: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Energy and Commerce, Subcomm. on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade*, 119th Cong. (Mar. 26, 2025).
[95] *Id.*
[96] *Id.*
[97] *Id.*
[98] *Id.*

- What steps are being taken to protect American consumers from exposure to harmful interactions with AI chatbots?

- Are there additional changes necessary to protect American consumers from mental health, safety, and privacy harms resulting from AI chatbot utilization?

V. STAFF CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this hearing, please contact Majority Committee staff at (202) 225-3641.